

Statement of Clarification February 20, 1998

Since it was released, NMFS' draft proposal concerning Oregon Forest Practices has been the subject of much discussion among concerned parties. NMFS wishes to clarify several important issues related to the riparian management zones (RMZs). These matters may not have been adequately explained, examined or understood to this point.

NMFS emphasizes that **this is a draft proposal that was presented to the Oregon Board of Forestry's Advisory Committee for discussion and possible modification.** At this point, the concepts contained in the draft RMZ proposals may be more important than the details. Those concepts include (1) establishment of an inner RMZ that is managed for a lower risk to salmon habitat than the outer zone, primarily to provide bank stability and assist with shade, litter fall and sediment filtration; (2) establishment of an outer zone that is managed somewhat less conservatively, primarily for large wood recruitment, shade, litter fall and sediment filtration; (3) assurance that greater numbers of large trees will grow and fall into the streams, where needed; and (4) assurance that unstable areas adjacent to streams will be included in the RMZs.

Reviewers of this draft report should understand that **the Riparian Management Zones are presented as interim default measures that would be adjusted following a watershed analysis.** For example, following a watershed analysis, areas that are important sources of large wood, cold water and sediment, or that are adjacent to important salmon spawning and rearing areas could be protected with relatively large RMZs, while areas that are less important could be protected with smaller RMZs. **NMFS believes that watershed analyses should be conducted as rapidly as feasible.**

Second, some have characterized the RMZs as excessively large no-touch zones. While the RMZs are larger than the current riparian management areas, **the RMZs proposed for all types of perennial streams would allow management (e.g. thinning) until mature forest conditions (i.e. 80-200 year-old stands) are attained.** Since stands are young on most private forest lands on the Oregon Coast, this would mean management in those areas would continue for several decades. During that time, riparian and fisheries science would continue to evolve, and management measures likely would change as well.

For intermittent streams, there would be a 30-foot inner no-harvest zone for streams on slopes over 30%. For the outer part of the RMZ, and for the entire RMZ on slopes less than 30%, the RMZ could be managed (e.g. thinned) to grow mature trees. However, unlike for perennial streams, **selective harvest would continue in these intermittent stream RMZs after mature forest conditions are attained.**

NMFS agrees that the desired riparian conditions described in the Oregon Forest Practice Rules (629-640-000, below) are necessary, but not sufficient by themselves, for the long-term survival of coho salmon:

(2) The desired future condition for streamside trees along fish streams is to grow and retain vegetation so that, over time, average conditions across the landscape become similar to those of mature streamside stands. Oregon has a tremendous diversity of forest tree species growing along waters of the state and the age of mature streamside trees varies by species. Mature streamside trees are often dominated by conifer trees. For many conifer stands, mature stands occur between 80 and 200 years of stand age. Hardwood stands and some conifer stands may become mature at an earlier age. Mature stands provide ample shade over the channel, an abundance of large woody debris in the channel, channel-influencing root masses along the edge of the high water level, snags, and regular inputs of nutrients through litter-fall.

(4) The desired future condition for streamside areas that do not have fish use is to have sufficient streamside vegetation to support the functions and processes that are important to downstream fish uses and to supplement wildlife habitat across the landscape. Such functions and processes include: maintenance of cool water temperature and other water quality parameters; influences on sediment production and bank stability; additions of nutrients and large conifer organic debris; and provision of snags, cover, and trees for wildlife.

The draft NMFS proposal is designed to ensure that these conditions will be achieved in coho salmon watersheds on the Oregon Coast in a manner that supports the long-term survival of this species.

The table on the following page may help to further clarify the information presented in the proposal.

Riparian Management Zones
NMFS February 17, 1998 Draft Proposal

Feature	Perennial Fish-Bearing Streams	Perennial Non-Fish Bearing Streams	Seasonal (intermittent) streams
Inner RMZ Width	30 feet	30 feet	Slopes under 30% - 0 feet. Slopes over 30% - 30 feet.
Total RMZ width	1 site-potential tree (150-200 feet)	2/3 site-potential tree (100-150 feet)	½ site-potential tree (75-100 feet).
Silvicultural Target - Inner RMZ	Grow mature forest conditions typical of a 80- to 200-year old stand at that site. Retain relative density of at least 50.	Grow mature forest conditions typical of a 80- to 200-year old stand at that site. Retain relative density of at least 50.	Slopes under 30% - retain relative density of at least 30. Slopes over 30% - total tree retention
Activities - Inner RMZ	Light thinning only, without ground-based equipment.	Light thinning only, without ground-based equipment.	Slopes under 30% - pre-commercial or commercial thinning only. Slopes over 30% - total tree retention.
Silvicultural Goal - Outer RMZ	Grow mature forest conditions typical of a 80- to 200-year old stand at that site. Maintain a relative density of at least 30 during any timber harvest. Retain the largest trees for LWD.	Grow mature forest conditions typical of a 80- to 200-year old stand at that site. Maintain a relative density of at least 30 during any timber harvest. Retain the largest trees for LWD.	Grow and retain mature trees for LWD while allowing selective harvest. Maintain a relative density of at least 30 during any timber harvest.
Activities - Outer RMZ	After the RMZ attains mature forest there would be no further management and the stand should be allowed to grow. A written plan should be required for timber harvest within an RMZ	After the RMZ attains mature forest conditions there would be no further management and the stand should be allowed to grow. A written plan should be required for timber harvest within an RMZ	Selective harvest allowed after mature forest conditions attained (maintain relative density of at least 30). No written plan required for timber harvest in RMZ.